

7 Years Old by mangagal

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Summary:

When Steve was 7 years old he learned what sort of relationships he should have.

7 Years Old

Author's Note:

Steve's dad is the worst, sorry about that. This work contains child abuse and homophobic language so be aware of that!

He'd been 7 years old when he had learned his lesson. Girls were to fawn over and marry when you got older; boys were to play sports with and to toughen up with. You'd better not confuse what you were supposed to do with which.

Timmy had just moved into town the day of Steve's 7th birthday. He hadn't been invited to his party but if Timmy had come to Hawkins a week earlier Steve would have invited him. Timmy had big wide brown eyes, like a baby deer, and curly brown hair that framed his freckled face and upturned nose. Steve thought that he was pretty.

There were lots of pretty people Steve had known over the years. Sally at preschool, Miss. White his preschool teacher, Ricky who lived down the street from his cousins, the teenager who delivered the paper, Mrs. Bloom who worked in the front office. There were pretty people everywhere but Timmy was extra pretty. Steve wanted to be his friend! It was easy to do; they both liked the swings on the playground and the same TV shows. They didn't like all of the same things but that was okay! Timmy would read his books, sometime he would read aloud to Steve, and Steve would draw a picture or play with his cars or something else.

They were inseparable. Tommy H. was less than happy about being replaced by this newcomer but Steve hardly noticed. Sometimes when they were playing Steve would get distracted by Timmy's freckles and would find himself staring for too long. He wondered if that was weird. Sometimes though, he would catch Timmy staring at him for too long too. Maybe Timmy thought he was pretty too, or maybe Steve just had dirt smudged on his nose again. Steve hoped it was the first option. It made his insides feel all warm and fluttery, like he had baby birds trapped in there or something. It

was a good feeling.

“What?” Timmy asked, scrubbing self-consciously at the back of his neck. Steve had been caught staring again.

“It’s just that you’re so pretty.” Steve panicked, blurting out the first thing that came to mind. He slapped his hand over his mouth, knowing that you shouldn’t call men pretty, his mom had taught him that. But Timmy didn’t seem upset by it, in fact he almost looked happy. He leaned a little closer, fingers brushing together in the carpet, trains lay forgotten on the floor.

“Really?” Timmy asked, “I think you’re pretty too.” Timmy bit at his lip like he was nervous before speaking again, “You know what I saw on TV yesterday?”

“What?” Steve asked, he wondered if he’d seen it or if he’d been in bed by then.

“There was this movie,” Timmy started, talking excitedly, “and the guy told the girl she was pretty and then they kissed. You want to try it?” Steve screwed up his face in confusion.

“But we can’t do that,” he protested, “we’re both boys, it wouldn’t be the same as the movie.”

“Well it wouldn’t be just the same,” Timmy seemed to think about it, “but you think I’m pretty so that would be the same. Oh! And you have the same hair color so that would be the same! So you want to try it? I’ve never kissed anyone before, do you think we’ll like it?” He seemed excited about it; Steve couldn’t deny that he was at least curious about it too. He’d seen people kiss on TV before and he’d seen his parents kiss a few times but he’d never really thought about it too much before but now that Timmy had brought it up it did seem like something that Steve should at least try out for himself.

Steve nodded, leaning in a little bit. Timmy leaned in a little bit too. Steve wasn’t sure what he was supposed to do next. Should he close his eyes or keep them open? He could feel the other boy’s breath on his cheek; he leaned in a little bit more. He was about to lean in all the way when his fathers voice cut through the quiet living

room.

“Steven!” His dad’s voice cutting harshly through the room, “Get over here!” Steve scrambled up and over to his dad, he only used that voice when he was really mad. His hand came down hard on Steve’s shoulder, his fingers digging into the soft vulnerable joint. Steve let out a little protest but the look his father gave him stopped Steve from complaining any further.

“I think it’s time that you went home.” His father continued coldly, fixing his icy glare on Timmy.

“Yes sir.” Timmy squeaked out, rushing to the door, cramming his feet into his shoes without bothering with the laces, before shooting Steve an apologetic look and running off down the street. Steve wanted to squirm out of the hold his father had on him but he knew better. No sooner had the door closed than his father was on him.

“What were you doing?” His father hissed dangerously close to his face.

“We weren’t doing anything.” Steve tried, wiggling to try and put some distance between them. But all it did was make him dig his fingers in harder causing Steve to let out a sharp gasp of pain.

“Do I look like an idiot to you?” Steve had thought he wasn’t expected to answer the question but he was apparently wrong as he was given a sharp shake when he didn’t answer fast enough.

“No sir.” He gulped, his dad was really mad.

“Well I know what you look like boy,” his father loomed threateningly, “you look like a fucking fag.” Steve didn’t know what that was but it couldn’t be a good thing.

“I’m not!” Steve plead, he didn’t know what it was but he didn’t want to be one if it made his dad so angry.

“Well you sure looked like one to me,” his dad said, dragging him along further into the house, “and you said I wasn’t an idiot so I must be right.”

"I'm not!" Steve protested, tears springing to his eyes at his rough treatment.

"God will know if you're lying," he threatened, "and he'll send you to hell for being a queer. Do you want that?" He asked, glancing back as he dragged Steve along behind him, grip still painfully tight.

"No, I don't want to." Steve wailed, tears running down his face. He was scared.

"Then I better not catch you doing anything like that again." He said, throwing the door open and thrusting Steve into his room, "You better not hang around people like that anymore or else I'll have to beat it out of you. And stop your crying, men don't cry like that." He sneered down at Steve who had tripped on his way in. "Stay in here and think about what you've done. Don't give me that look," his dad looked coldly down on him where he was sniveling on the floor, "I'm doing this for your own good." With that he slammed the door, leaving Steve in the unnatural silence left in the wake of his anger.

Steve dragged himself over to his bed, shoulder throbbing painfully. He pulled back his shirt; the angry looking red marks were already turning into a dark bruise on his pale skin. He lay there trying to figure out what his dad had meant and what he could do so he wouldn't be mad at him anymore and so he wouldn't go to hell. He could hear his mom getting dinner ready downstairs. His stomach grumbled but no one had said he could come out of his room yet so he just lay there trying to ignore his empty stomach and his aching shoulder. It was dark outside before he heard his door creak open and his mom slipped in, silently closing the door behind her. She held a finger to her lips and Steve nodded his understanding. She'd brought him a sandwich and a bag of ice.

"Mom?" Steve whispered, hoping that his dad couldn't hear them over the TV.

"What Steve?" She whispered back, pulling his shirt back into place after she finished looking at his shoulder.

“What’s a fag?” He asked quietly. Her lips went thin and pale and she pressed a little too hard on his shoulder making him gasp.

“Well you shouldn’t use language like that.” She smoothed his hair back as apology for accidentally hurting him, “But a fag is a gay man, someone who has sex with other men.” Steve screwed up his face in confusion. He sort of knew what sex was, Tommy’s older brother had a stash of VHS tapes and they had watched one in their dark basement, it had looked kind of gross to Steve. Tommy’s brother said they’d like it when they were older. Steve didn’t know two guys could do that though.

“They live such a sad existence,” she sighed out, still stroking Steve’s hair, “they get beaten to death all the time. One was found in a dumpster in the city last month. That or they catch all sorts of terrible diseases or get locked away. It’s really quite sad.” Steve was tearing up again, he didn’t want to get killed or anything like that. His mother frantically tried to quiet him.

“Steve, you have to stop crying.” She whispered fiercely, “Your father will be furious if he catches you crying again.”

“I don’t want to die!” Steve tried to muffle his crying with his hands but it was hard. She sighed tiredly.

“You’re a good boy aren’t you Steve?” She asked, he nodded seriously that yes he was. “Well if you’re a good boy then none of those bad things are going to happen to you okay?” That calmed him down enough to quiet his crying. She reminded him to brush his teeth before he went to sleep and left the room as silently as she had entered it. Steve did as he was told and tried to comfort himself with the thought that as long as he was good he would be alright.

He woke up with swollen eyes and he had a hard time lifting up his arm. When he took his shirt off he could see clear finger shaped bruises on his thin shoulder. He pulled on the thickest sweater he could, like it would hide what had happened. When he went downstairs his father didn’t bother looking up from his newspaper at him but he also didn’t yell at him so Steve thought maybe he was forgiven.

When he got to school his eyes met with Timmy's but the two of them kept their distance. Tommy didn't mention it when Steve slips back to his side after weeks of sticking to the new kid; he seemed relieved that he hadn't been replaced. He had to sit out at gym though because his arm was bothering him too much. He told them he'd run into a corner and hurt it, they seemed to believe it.

Timmy tried to come over once after that. Steve's dad had met him at the door and told him he wasn't welcome at their house anymore. It was okay though; they could still play together at recess. That was, at least, until Steve saw his dad parked in his car next to the field at recess during what must have been his lunch break. Steve knew he'd be in trouble later, he knew that he wouldn't be able to play with Timmy anymore. It was with a heavy heart and heavier feet that Steve headed home after school. He left the school gates only to see his dad parked across the street. For a moment he wondered if he could pretend that he hadn't seen him but his dad already knew that he'd seen him. Steve trudged over and let himself into his dad's new car, this year's model. His dad stepped on the gas too fast, not even acknowledging that Steve had gotten into the car or waiting for him to put his seatbelt on.

The tires had skidded to a stop on their gravel driveway. Steve silently followed his dad into the house. He had yelled at him, Steve kept his head down, hoping to hide the tears that were gathering and to keep his dad from getting angrier. But it only seemed to do the opposite. He grabbed Steve's chin, forcing his head up before he slapped him hard across the face. The next day he had a dark bruise discoloring his cheekbone.

His teacher said she was worried about him; she was worried about the unusual injuries he'd been showing up with lately. She asked him if his father beat him. Steve said that he didn't.

He wasn't like Byers whose dad beat him all the time. His dad loved him; he was only trying to teach him a lesson. He only hit him because he'd been bad.

She didn't seem to believe him. She called his dad about his bruises.

“He must be going through a growth spurt,” his dad laughed charmingly, “he’s just been so clumsy lately. Last night he fell down the last few stairs and into the wall. We put ice on it of course but he just bruises so easily!” Of course she believed him. He was charming when he wanted to be and he was an important person in the community and she didn’t want to make her life unnecessarily by accusing him of anything like that. Steve’s dad didn’t hit him after that but he always made sure to remind him about what was expected of him.

Timmy moved away at the end of the school year. He’d given Steve his new address on a scrap of paper so that they could write and had kissed Steve on the cheek before he left. His dad found the paper and shredded it.

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Steve woke with a start. The sun was just setting outside, casting a pink tint over his bedmates. Both of them snuggled up against him, using him as a pillow was more like it. His brain was fuzzy with sleep and the dream was quickly slipping away, a blur of the past bleeding together. He must have tensed up, squeezing the still sleeping teens because Jonathan stirred nuzzling sleepily into Steve’s shoulder.

“What time is it?” He mumbled, voice still thick with sleep. It was adorable.

“We still have time,” Steve reassured him, “the sun’s not even down yet.” Steve trailed off, lost in thought.

“What’s wrong?” Jonathan asked when Steve squeezed him a little tighter. He wasn’t as good as Nancy was at picking up on Steve’s moods but he was getting better at it.

“I never invited you to any of my birthday parties.” Steve said a bit sadly, he didn’t know why that was lodged in his brain but it was.

“Okay?” Jonathan sounded just as confused as Steve felt, “We weren’t even friends, I don’t know why you would have? I’ll be here

for the next one though.” That made a little smile spread across his face at that.

“You didn’t invite me to any of your birthdays either.” Nancy complained sleepily into his shoulder, he hadn’t even realized that she was awake.

“You should invite us both to your birthday party this year.” Jonathan teases, propping himself up on Steve’s bare chest.

“I haven’t had a birthday party since I was 12!” He found himself laughing at their antics despite the dark mood he’d woken up in.

“Well then you better start planning,” Nancy smirked, “I’m not missing out on the legendary Steve Harrington birthday experience!” She raised herself up to flop on top of the two of them and Steve might have gotten an elbow to the face as they collapsed in a pile of giggles but he wouldn’t have it any other way.

Author's Note:

I hope you lovelies enjoyed this! Thank you so much for reading! The next story is about prom and is generally fluffy so look forward to that since the last couple of stories have been a little heavy. I love hearing from you and I cherish every comment so please feel free to leave one and/or a kudos! Hope you are all have wonderful weekends!